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Chairman: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ): Mr. Saha

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 113: Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments (*continued*)

(b) Appointment of a member of the Committee on Contributions (A/60/102/Add.1)

1. **The Chairman** drew attention to document A/60/102/Add.1, by which the Secretary-General informed the General Assembly of the resignation of Mr. David Dutton from the Committee on Contributions and requested the Assembly to appoint a person to fill the remaining portion of Mr. Dutton's term of office, which would expire on 31 December 2007.

2. In the same document the Secretary-General informed the Assembly that the Government of Australia had nominated Mr. Gordon Eckersley to fill the vacancy arising from Mr. Dutton's resignation and that his candidature had been endorsed by the Group of Western European and Other States. The Chairman took it that the Committee decided, by acclamation, to recommend the appointment of Mr. Gordon Eckersley as a member of the Committee on Contributions, beginning on the date of the appointment by the General Assembly and ending on 31 December 2007.

3. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 124: Programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 (*continued*)

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/60/L.48, Human Rights Council (*continued*) (A/60/7/Add.34 and A/C.5/60/28)

4. **The Chairman** drew the attention of the Committee to the statement of the Secretary-General on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/60/L.48 (A/C.5/60/28) and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/60/7/Add.34).

5. **Ms. McGrath** (Ireland), speaking as the coordinator of the informal consultations on the item, read out the following draft decision: "The Fifth Committee, having considered the statement of programme budget implications submitted by the Secretary-General and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, decides to inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/60/L.48, there would be need for an additional appropriation of $4,328,700 net, subject to the procedures governing the use and operation of the contingency fund". She trusted that the draft decision could be adopted without a vote.

6. **Mr. Wolff** (United States of America), speaking in explanation of position, said that Member States had been working hard to establish a Human Rights Council and that his delegation appreciated the efforts of the President of the General Assembly and of many Member States to create an improved and more effective human rights body. During the negotiations the United States had sought to defend some fundamental principles that reflected its commitment to the advancement and support of human rights around the world. The United Nations played an especially important role in that regard.

7. However, the text put forward by the President of the General Assembly in draft resolution A/60/L.48 fell short of that objective. The United States would vote against the draft resolution when it came before the General Assembly, and therefore could not join the Committee's consensus on the related programme budget implications. The United States intended to work with other Member States to ensure that the Human Rights Council would be as effective as possible in promoting human rights.

8. *The draft decision was adopted.*

9. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa), speaking in explanation of position on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group had been ready to take action on the statement of programme budget implications since 6 March 2006, but had agreed to the requests of one delegation to delay action, because it was committed to listening to the views of each and every Member State and to finding consensus solutions.

10. The Group was pleased that the Committee had endorsed the additional human and financial resources that would be required to ensure the effective functioning of the Human Rights Council. However, it regretted that not all Member States had been able to join the consensus on the proposed programme budget implications. The Group believed that the decision would ensure that the human rights machinery of the United Nations would be able to function without any interruption. It remained committed to efforts to reform and strengthen the United Nations, including its human rights machinery.

11. **Mr. Berti Oliva** (Cuba) said that his delegation had joined the consensus on the draft decision, but wished to express its concern that the Human Rights Council had been established with resources from the contingency fund, rather than from additional resources. As a result, the resources available in the contingency fund would be significantly reduced for the first three months of the current biennium. The General Assembly should, at the appropriate time, examine and take action on measures to deal with new mandates requiring additional resources. Cuba trusted that any development-related activities that arose during the remainder of the biennium and that had financial implications would be treated appropriately, and that additional resources would be provided when such activities could not be financed from the contingency fund. The argument that there were no resources in the contingency fund should not be used to block the implementation of new activities arising from resolutions that were in the interests of developing countries.

Revised estimates to the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007: 2005 World Summit Outcome: Peacebuilding Support Office
(A/60/7/Add.36 and A/60/694)

12. **Mr. Dossal** (Executive Director of the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP)), introducing the Secretary-General's report (A/60/694), said that the proposed structure of the Peacebuilding Support Office was consistent with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 60/180. The main function of the Office would be to directly support the work of the Peacebuilding Commission by providing substantive input and analysis using information drawn from both within and outside the United Nations system.

13. The Secretary-General envisioned that the Office would support the Commission's work in the areas of financing for peacebuilding, planning and policy analysis and that it would manage the Peacebuilding Fund. As stated in the report, a total of 15 staff were being requested, comprising 12 Professional and 3 General Service staff. It was expected that five of the Professional posts would be provided through redeployment and that three would be provided through non-reimbursable secondment from organizations of the United Nations system. The Secretary-General was therefore requesting seven additional posts: four at the Professional level and three at the General Service level.

14. It was important to stress that the Office would draw upon existing expertise, including that of the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Development Group and the United Nations Development Programme. As indicated in the report, the Bretton Woods institutions would also be involved, in order to ensure coherence of action.

15. General Assembly resolution 60/180 specifically requested that the Office should be staffed by qualified experts and that its functions should include gathering and analysing information relating to the availability of financial resources, relevant United Nations in-country planning activities, progress towards meeting short- and medium-term recovery goals and best practices with respect to cross-cutting peacebuilding issues. The Secretary-General proposed that the Office should be headed by an Assistant Secretary-General, who would represent the Office in its interaction with key United Nations and non-United Nations officials and would work with international financial institutions, regional organizations, Permanent Missions and other relevant actors.

16. **Mr. Saha** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) introduced the related ACABQ report (A/60/7/Add.36), which highlighted a number of difficult issues in relation to the Secretary-General's proposal and sought to provide a technically correct solution that would ensure the timely start-up of the Peacebuilding Support Office without setting a precedent that would compromise budgetary transparency. As it was a complex matter, he would not enter into details at the current meeting. He recommended a careful reading of the report, which was brief and, he hoped, would provide a way out of a difficult dilemma.

17. **Mr. Drofenik** (Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro; and, in addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said it was essential that the Peacebuilding Support Office should be provided with adequate resources.

18. The Advisory Committee's report was a good basis for discussions in that regard; it should be borne in mind that the resource needs of the Office would be reviewed within one year and that any requirements for consultants and travel would be included in the performance report. The resource request before the Committee represented a substantial improvement on the previous proposal, contained in document A/60/537. The European Union welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to accommodate the staffing needs of the Office through redeployment and the use of staff seconded to the Secretariat on a non-reimbursable basis, and trusted that similar efforts would be made in the future.

19. The European Union accepted the proposal to meet the Office's requirements through the provision for special political missions under section 3 of the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007, and agreed with ACABQ that the provision for special political missions should be used only for activities of limited duration. However, for the programme budget 2008-2009, it would be necessary to explore different funding arrangements that would provide budgetary transparency. The Office should be located in such a way as to ensure its integration into the Secretariat, as well as the necessary interaction with relevant departments and other actors.

20. It was the European Union's understanding that the Office would not possess direct operational capacity, but would be staffed by qualified experts who would assist and support the Peacebuilding Commission and draw upon the best expertise available within the Secretariat. The European Union wished to reiterate that it was crucial for the Office to have a strong gender advisory capacity, and would welcome the views of the Secretariat on that question and, if appropriate, on the possibility of seconding staff with the necessary expertise.

21. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, recalled that at the time of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 60/180, which had finalized the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, it had become clear that the Secretary-General would not be able to provide the necessary support to the Peacebuilding Commission from within existing resources. The Committee had therefore decided to revert to the matter on the basis of information provided by the Secretary-General on the status of the establishment of the Peacebuilding Support Office.

22. The Group wished to reaffirm its commitment to ensuring that the Office received the human and financial resources it needed in order to provide effective support for the Commission's work. However, the Group would welcome clarification on certain aspects of the reports of the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee.

23. First, the Group noted the proposal that the additional resource requirements should be charged against the provision for special political missions under section 3 of the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007. In that regard, it should be recalled that the additional resource requirements resulting from the implementation of other 2005 World Summit decisions had been financed as revised estimates to the programme budget. Moreover, in 2005 the General Assembly had approved only a portion of the total provision required for special political missions for the biennium 2006-2007. The Group would therefore welcome more specific information about the proposal.

24. Second, the Group noted that more than half the staffing needs of the Office would be met through either the redeployment of existing resources or the secondment of staff from other United Nations organizations. It wished to know whether the staff to be redeployed would come from the Department of Political Affairs or from other Secretariat departments under the 50-post redeployment experiment referred to in paragraph 14 of General Assembly resolution 58/270. The Group would also like to receive an indication of the proposed redeployment's expected impact on programme delivery in the releasing section or department, along with a breakdown of the organizations that would provide the posts to the United Nations Secretariat.

25. Third, the Group noted the reduction of $1,234,100 that might arise if the Assembly were to endorse the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in paragraphs 8, 10, 11 and 12 of its report. Careful consideration should be given to the impact that any reduction in the proposed resource level might have on the overall functioning of the Peacebuilding Support Office and on its ability to support the work of the Commission, particularly in the start-up phase. She would therefore welcome

clarification as to what impact, if any, the proposed reductions might have on the Office. It was not clear whether the Office would be able to carry out its support functions in the areas of planning, policy and analysis by means of non-traditional communication methods such as videoconferencing, which might be a poor substitute for direct interaction with staff in the field.

26. Fourth, she would be interested to hear the rationale behind the proposal that the Office should be headed by an Assistant Secretary-General, and wished to stress the importance of ensuring that the Organization's international character was respected in the recruitment and selection of staff for the Office. The Commission should have the opportunity to benefit from the expertise of nationals of developing countries and regions affected by the type of challenges that the Commission had been mandated to address.

27. The Group looked forward to constructive discussions concerning the resource requirements for the Office, and fully supported the work of the Peacebuilding Commission. Member States must ensure that the Commission received the necessary resources to ensure its effective functioning. The establishment of the Commission was an important part of the overall efforts to strengthen the United Nations, and the Group therefore trusted that other Member States would join it in responding favourably to the Secretary-General's request for additional resources.

28. **Ms. Soni** (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, said that she supported the Secretary-General's proposals, which technically met the requirement, set out in the 2005 World Summit Outcome, that the Peacebuilding Support Office should be established from within existing resources. The delegations of Canada, Australia and New Zealand had been among those that had urged the Secretariat to redouble its efforts to staff the Office through the internal redeployment of posts and secondments from partner organizations. The Secretariat had clearly made a genuine effort to do so, and should continue with that effort.

29. In view of the constraints encountered in the redeployment of posts, she supported the proposal that seven of the new positions should be funded from the provision for special political missions. That would be justified during the start-up phase of the Office in view of the close connection between the peacebuilding function and the mandates of many special political missions. It would also help ensure that the Office was established in a timely fashion. Failure to do so might hamper the effectiveness of the Peacebuilding Commission. However, the provision for special political missions should not be viewed as a permanent source of funding for the Office, and the Advisory Committee had rightly pointed out that its use should be re-evaluated during the next budget cycle, in the light of experience.

30. The creation of the Peacebuilding Commission was an essential reform, and the Commission must begin its work with adequate Secretariat resources in place. Given the magnitude of the Commission's task, the Secretary-General's proposals were modest. Moreover, the generic nature of some of his proposals was understandable, since the work plan for the Office could only be fully developed in the light of the tasks assigned to it by the Commission.

31. **Ms. Attwooll** (United States of America) said that the United States was deeply disappointed that the Secretary-General, in his proposal on the establishment of the Peacebuilding Support Office, had failed to follow the mandate conferred upon him in the 2005 World Summit Outcome and subsequent mandates from the General Assembly and the Security Council, all of which had called for the establishment of a small support office funded from within existing resources.

32. Her delegation noted that efforts had been made to accommodate five posts through redeployment and another three posts through the non-reimbursable secondment of staff from other United Nations organizations. However, it was deeply concerned that the Secretary-General had not been able to make similar arrangements in respect of the remaining seven posts, especially since the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and Support Office was one of the most promising reforms to have emanated from the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

33. As pointed out by the Advisory Committee, in view of the current level of funding in the special political missions account, further resources would be needed to fund special political missions even if the Peacebuilding Support Office was not financed from the account. The United States therefore questioned the notion that the charge would be from "existing resources".

34. The United States had continuously emphasized that Member States had intended the Peacebuilding Support Office to be a small office staffed out of existing resources. As stated in the Secretary-General's report, the Office would not have direct operational capacity, but would support the Commission through the collation and analysis of information relating to strategies and financing for peacebuilding, the preparation of analyses of cross-cutting peacebuilding issues, and the recording of the Commission's discussions. The Office would not undertake policy analysis, the formulation of strategies for United Nations activities or the formulation of policy guidelines or recommendations on the financing of peacebuilding activities.

35. The United States also believed that the proposed Peacebuilding Fund should be managed by the United Nations Development Programme, which had clear expertise in that area. Furthermore, the Office could be effectively led by a staff member at a level no higher than D-2. Both the level and number of the Office's staff, as envisaged by the Secretary-General, potentially infringed on the prerogatives of the Commission's members. While sharing the hope for the timely establishment of the Office, the United States firmly believed that efforts to respect its mandate should not be disregarded in order to meet an artificial deadline. The United States therefore looked forward to working constructively with its colleagues in the Committee to find a way to meet the staffing requirements of the Office at the appropriate level, in line with the mandate given by Member States.

36. **Mr. Hønningstad** (Norway) said that his delegation, which had aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union, wished to elaborate on the importance of women's participation in peacebuilding activities and of protecting the rights of women in conflict and post-conflict situations, in line with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security.

37. Norway's consistent and long-term peacebuilding strategy included a $30 million contribution to the Peacebuilding Fund. Part of that strategy was the belief that, in order to succeed, the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Commission must integrate into their work the interests and rights of women referred to in resolution 1325 (2000). However, much remained to be done to mainstream the gender perspective in efforts to promote peace, security and development. Norway would work to ensure gender balance in the staffing of the Peacebuilding Support Office, especially in senior management posts, and wished to discuss, in informal consultations, the establishment of a gender adviser position in the Support Office.

38. **Mr. Kozaki** (Japan) said that, since Member States had called for the establishment of a small Peacebuilding Support Office within existing resources, as expressed in the 2005 World Summit Outcome and General Assembly resolution 60/180, the course of action described in the report of the Secretary-General was unsatisfactory. However, his delegation considered the Advisory Committee recommendations regarding non-post requirements to be reasonable and appropriate.

39. **Mr. Yoo** Dae-jong (Republic of Korea) said that the need for the Peacebuilding Commission and associated Peacebuilding Support Office was clear: half of the countries emerging from war had lapsed back into armed conflict within five years, and 30 of the 100 conflicts which had raged in various parts of the world in the previous 15 years were still active. Although the cost of ignoring those conflicts was incalculable, the cost of addressing them must be intelligently managed.

40. The structure of the Peacebuilding Support Office, as described in annex I to the report of the Secretary-General, was top-heavy; the reduction in posts from the 21 originally proposed to 15 had been achieved by cutting posts in the General Service and Professional categories, leaving Director-level posts untouched. Since resolution 60/180 called for the Support Office to be staffed by qualified experts, he wondered why so many senior staff were needed.

41. He asked the Secretariat to specify which sections of the Secretariat and partner organizations would supply redeployed and seconded staff for the Support Office, and to provide details on the administration of the Peacebuilding Fund, including staffing requirements. Agreeing with the Advisory Committee that the Organization would be departing from an established principle if it used the provision for special political missions to fund the regular, recurring requirements of the Support Office, his Government believed that such a diversion of resources was poor budgetary practice and ran counter to the goal of

reforming the Organization by making it proactive rather than reactive.

42. Mindful that the Peacebuilding Support Office was intended to be a repository of expertise from across the United Nations system, his delegation shared the concern of the Advisory Committee at the sums requested for the use of outside consultants, and agreed with it that recourse to consultants must be requested in advance and duly justified. It also agreed with the Advisory Committee that travel requirements should be kept to a minimum, in line with the non-operational role of the Support Office.

43. **Mr. Ng'ongolo** (United Republic of Tanzania) asked the Secretariat how it proposed to address the practical problem described by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 8 of its report: that of reconciling the desire of the General Assembly to establish the Peacebuilding Support Office with the need to operate within existing resources and preserve budgetary transparency. In his delegation's view, additional resources would be needed. His Government hoped that the proposed staffing structure had taken due account of the mandate and status of the Peacebuilding Support Office, despite its small size.

44. **Mr. Mazumdar** (India) noted that the Secretary-General had tried twice, with only partial success, to comply with the General Assembly's request that he should establish a Peacebuilding Support Office from within existing resources. To inform the Committee's discussions on how to manage the staffing table of the Organization in general and the Support Office in particular, he requested the Secretariat to indicate what practical obstacles had arisen in the current case.

45. The Support Office was exactly what its name suggested; it had never been intended to supplant the role of other parts of the Organization in the work of the Peacebuilding Commission. Since its function was to centralize expertise, it must not duplicate the functions of other Secretariat departments and United Nations entities.

46. **Mr. Elnaggar** (Egypt) said that mandates which the Member States had collectively given the Organization must be backed by adequate resources in order to be implemented effectively. Many delegations had rightly expressed concern at the proposal to draw on funds earmarked for special political missions in order to establish the Peacebuilding Support Office. His delegation shared those concerns, and would also like to know the rationale for adopting a variety of funding solutions for mandates established by a single resolution. The other mandates arising from General Assembly resolution 60/1 were to be funded from additional resources.

47. His delegation wished the Secretariat to clarify how the Peacebuilding Support Office would interact with other entities of the Organization working in similar fields. It joined other delegations in calling for wide geographical distribution and proper gender balance in the staffing of the Support Office, but noted that due representation of developing countries was equally important. In addition, he wondered whether the levels at which the proposed posts were to be established were in line with the mandate of the Peacebuilding Support Office, and how they compared to the levels of posts in other offices of comparable size and remit.

48. **Ms. Udo** (Nigeria) said that the General Assembly, in its resolution 60/180, had set crucial objectives for the Peacebuilding Commission. The Peacebuilding Support Office was part of the machinery that must be set up to achieve those objectives. The Secretary-General, in his report, had provided a full response to the Committee's December 2005 request to him to report back to it on resource requirements for the Support Office.

49. Her delegation supported the modest resource request contained in that report, and also saw merit in the Advisory Committee's recommendation, set out in paragraph 8 of its report, that the staffing arrangements of the Support Office should be kept under review. However, she was concerned about the Advisory Committee's comment in paragraph 12 of its report, and asked the Secretariat to clarify how it could effectively and efficiently discharge its responsibilities in a distant and detached manner, as suggested. Her Government expected that every effort would be made to ensure that the staff of the Support Office reflected a careful geographical and gender balance.

50. **Mr. Torres Lépori** (Argentina) speaking also on behalf of Brazil and Guatemala, said that the Peacebuilding Commission, as an essential plank of the reform of the Organization, needed the support of a Peacebuilding Support Office with the requisite resources. He hoped that the Committee would work to ensure that it had a suitable funding level and staffing structure. Sharing the concern expressed by the

Advisory Committee about the proposal to use special political mission resources to cover the cost of seven posts, he urged that the provision for such missions should not be abused as it had been in the past. He also echoed other delegations' call for geographical and gender balance among the staff of the Support Office.

51. **Mr. Dossal** (Executive Director of the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships) said that, if the members of the Committee so agreed, he would reply to their questions during informal consultations.

52. **Mr. Mazumdar** (India) said that, while he would be pleased to receive further clarification in informal consultations, he would like his question about the practical difficulties which the Secretary-General had faced when attempting to redeploy staff to be answered at a formal meeting of the Committee.

53. **Ms. Van Buerle** (Director a.i. of the Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the Secretariat had not yet been able to definitively identify five posts for redeployment. Although it had determined, at the end of 2005, that some posts were available as part of the 50-post redeployment exercise, the departments to which those posts were attached must be consulted again to assess the impact of such a redeployment. The main practical difficulties were that most departments' budgets had not become clear until the beginning of 2006, that it was uncertain whether they could still fulfil their own mandates if they lost posts, and that, as a variety of staffing needs were to be met through redeployment, the Peacebuilding Support Office was not alone in competing for posts from that source.

54. **Ms. Udo** (Nigeria) said it was her understanding that the Secretary-General might not even be in a position to provide five posts through redeployment and that additional resources for the Peacebuilding Support Office might be needed. She asked the Secretariat to confirm whether or not that understanding was correct.

55. **Mr. Elnaggar** (Egypt) said that he, too, would like the Secretariat to clarify whether his impression of the current situation was correct. Like the representative of Nigeria, he understood that there had been no definite identification of five posts for possible redeployment to the Peacebuilding Support Office. In addition, he understood that if and when posts were identified for redeployment, they would be used in order of priority to staff not only the Support Office, but also other entities. Finally, he had the impression that, although Secretariat entities such as the regional commissions had been placed under considerable pressure to identify posts for redeployment in the preceding biennium, the posts had returned to them at the end of 2005 and the process of identifying posts for redeployment must start again for the biennium 2006-2007.

56. **Ms. Van Buerle** (Director a.i. of the Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the posts identified as being available for redeployment in the biennium 2004-2005, but not actually assigned to new functions, had indeed, as of 1 January 2006, reverted to the departments to which they had originally been attached. That meant that the Secretariat would have to consult the relevant departments again to see whether those posts were still available. An added difficulty was that the posts previously identified for redeployment were at the P-2 and P-3 levels, rather than at the P-4 level and above.

Introduction of a cost-accounting system (A/60/714)

57. **The Chairman** drew attention to, and invited comments on, a note by the Secretary-General describing the progress made in determining the feasibility of applying cost-accounting principles in the Secretariat.

58. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa) said that, while her delegation did not challenge the note in question, it would like the Secretariat to clarify what circumstances warranted the use of such notes. While her delegation welcomed the submission of notes on issues such as problems in meeting reporting deadlines, for example, it questioned the use of notes to convey proposals that would require the General Assembly to approve additional resources or take other action.

59. **The Chairman** said that the request of the representative of South Africa would be addressed. He took it that the Committee wished to take note of the information contained in document A/60/714.

60. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.